

**CHOICE BASED LETTINGS – ADOPTION OF LETTINGS POLICY
(Report by the Head of Housing Services)****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the progress made on implementing a sub regional Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme and recommend the adoption of a draft new Lettings Policy.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Cabinet received a report on 1 February 2007 on the progress made and implications of the Cambridge sub regional CBL scheme, and also requesting authority to consult on a new Lettings Policy. The seven Councils making up the Cambridge sub region had agreed the broad principles of a lettings policy to ensure that there is consistency in who can apply for housing, how households are prioritised and how the CBL process will work.
- 2.2 Each partner has now finalised the consultation process on their individual policies. As a partnership we have also completed an exercise of comparing consultation responses to ascertain whether any of the broad policy issues required amendment in light of comments from stakeholders and service users, so as to maintain consistency across the seven lettings policies.
- 2.3 There were no substantial changes required to the policy as a result of this exercise. In the main consultation responses revolved around ensuring the scheme was accessible to all and easy to understand. These are issues that are important and will be addressed but do not affect the Lettings Policy document. The document has been reformatted and improved in terms of layout of the sections and some of the language used.

3. IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 In order to implement a CBL scheme and provide a clear and consistent approach to service users across the sub region each partner must adopt a new Lettings Policy. Each Council is required to formally adopt a 'lettings scheme' which sets out how properties will be allocated and this Lettings Policy is the legal document which fulfils this purpose. Without a new Lettings Policy which fits into the sub regional CBL scheme, the Council is unable to legally determine which households should be prioritised for the social rented homes in the Huntingdonshire area.
- 3.2 The legality of lettings policies operated under CBL schemes has recently been the subject of challenge via the Courts. The partnership has sought legal advice about the proposed policy and under current guidance it meets the requirements of legislation and precedents set by recent caselaw. As this is an area where further challenge or guidance is likely a review of the policy and the scheme will take place within the first twelve months of the operation of the scheme.

- 3.3 The new Lettings Policy will come into affect when the CBL scheme 'goes live'. The date of this will depend upon successfully introducing a new IT system to manage the housing register and carry out the CBL processes. Under the current project plan this is likely to be February 2008 at the earliest although as other CBL schemes have experienced delays with implementing the IT systems this date may slip if similar problems are experienced.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The partners to the sub regional CBL scheme are now each at the stage of formally adopting their own new lettings policies which will be formally implemented when the CBL system goes live.
- 4.2 This will then allow all the sub regional partnership to finalise the procurement of the IT system required to implement the CBL scheme and tailor the IT system to fulfil our policy requirements.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That Cabinet approve the adoption of the draft Lettings Policy and for it to be implemented when the CBL system goes live.
- 5.2 That Cabinet receive a report on the progress of the CBL scheme within 12 months of its implementation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cambridge Sub Regional CBL Scheme – Cabinet reports: 19/10/06 and 1/2/07

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